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Summary record of the 15th meeting
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Chairman: Mr. Hachani ..... (Tunisia)
later: Mr. Carranza (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Guatemala)
later: Mr. Hachani (Chairman) ..... (Tunisia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 103: Advancement of women *(continued)* (A/53/38/Rev.1, A/53/72–S/1998/156, A/53/87, A/53/95–S/1998/311, A/53/167, 203, 318, 354, 363, 376, 409 and 447)

Agenda item 104: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women *(continued)* (A/53/72–S/1998/156, A/53/87, A/53/95–S/1998/311 and A/53/308)

1. **Ms. Fong** (World Bank) said that poverty reduction was at the heart of the World Bank's mission. Increasingly recognizing that gender was an important part of poverty reduction strategies and programmes, the Bank was mainstreaming gender in its research and analysis and in its lending and training programmes.

2. At the Beijing Conference, the President of the Bank had made a commitment to girls' education, in support of the goal that by the year 2010 all girls would be able to complete primary education and an equal number of boys and girls would go on to secondary education. The Bank would be devoting some $900 million per year to that goal by the end of the decade. Lending for girls' education had increased substantially and 31 countries were receiving assistance. The Bank was working in that area with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (with regard to statistics), non-governmental organizations, local authorities and women's groups.

3. The Bank's approach to development focused on social, political, cultural and environmental aspects. It not only dealt with macroeconomics, it also empowered people.

4. In the 1998 financial year, over half the Bank's country assistance strategies, the main vehicle in its dialogue with Governments and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, had addressed gender. Those strategies varied from country to country and the Bank was currently reviewing them in order to learn from those that had addressed gender effectively.

5. The Bank was currently preparing, in cooperation with civil society and development experts, a policy research report on gender and development, to be launched in June 2000, designed to strengthen the conceptual links between gender, public policy and development. By incorporating gender as a central tool in economic analysis, the Bank hoped to show how to enhance the equity, efficiency and sustainability of development policies and programmes.

6. Gender was also being mainstreamed in the Bank's *World Development Report* on poverty, to be issued in the year 2000. It also expected to launch in 2004 a *World Development Report* devoted entirely to gender in development.

7. With regard to lending, some 35 per cent of the Bank's portfolio addressed gender issues, especially in the social and agricultural sectors but also, increasingly, in sectors such as infrastructure. Apart from assistance to girls' education, its initiatives included the safe motherhood programme and microfinancing for poor households, with women accounting for over 70 per cent of the beneficiaries of the latter programme.

8. The Bank was also transforming itself into a knowledge bank that could share know-how and experience with clients and partners across the world. It had created a gender Web page with links to other key gender Web sites, developed a training package on gender, staff networks and thematic groups, set up a capacity-building programme and conducted seminars to enhance knowledge of gender issues.

9. The Bank had made substantial progress in the past three years in mainstreaming gender in poverty reduction, expanding its activities related to gender in development, and creating fruitful partnerships throughout the development community.

10. **Mr. Yacoubou** (Benin) noted that 161 States were parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and that, despite the reservations entered by 54 of those States, the Convention was almost universal. That was cause for celebration, since the Convention was the legal frame of reference for women's rights. His country had acceded to the Convention without reservations and urged other countries to follow suit on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

11. His Government welcomed the reorganization of the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which now held pre-session meetings in which the specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations took part.

12. It also welcomed the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat and the excellent report presented on that subject (A/53/376). It urged the various departments to ensure the training and retraining of staff members able to apply for vacancies.

13. While traffic in women and girls was caused by poverty, traditional or customary practices affecting their health were based on cultural beliefs and factors which

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information and awareness-raising could help to eradicate in favour of less risky practices that had the same symbolic value.

14. His country was determined to ensure equality between men and women and to enhance the status and role of women. It could claim a number of achievements in implementing the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the Beijing Platform for Action: the regular holding of national campaigns to raise awareness of men's and women's issues and seminars which were well reported in the press; the creation of an independent Ministry for the Status of Women and Social Affairs; an increase in the number of women at the highest levels of the Government; and equal pay for men and women.

15. Despite those achievements, Benin still had much to do to ensure gender equity; in particular, traditional education and the matrimonial property regime favoured men. A very patriarchal society could only change gradually.

16. The objectives of the Fourth World Conference on Women could only be achieved through integrated measures, and his country therefore fully supported the efforts of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women to integrate women in all activities of the agencies of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions. That inter-agency cooperation should, of course, feature an accountability component so that objectives and results could be compared and activities reoriented if necessary.

17. His delegation was very interested in the experience acquired in the context of the United Nations country cooperation framework for Mozambique, which might be of use to other countries and contribute to the attainment of the Beijing objectives; its implementation could benefit from the support of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIFEM and other United Nations bodies.

18. **Ms. Shawa** (Malawi), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), noted with satisfaction that at its substantive session in July 1998 the Economic and Social Council, in the context of its high-level debate on operational activities, had discussed the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the role of operational activities in promoting capacity-building and resource mobilization for enhancing the participation of women in development. SADC endorsed the recommendations formulated on that occasion. It was also pleased to note that in resolution 1998/43 the Council had taken steps to address the feminization of poverty, a problem only too familiar in southern Africa.

19. Since its establishment, SADC had focused on human development, enterprise creation, capacity-building and, more recently, productivity. It had, however, become aware that gender equality was essential to development and had embarked on an ambitious programme that should enable it to reverse gender imbalance in the region in the shortest possible time. To that end, the Heads of State of the SADC countries had signed in September 1997 a declaration on gender and development which had served as a basis for the draft plan of action for gender in the region.

20. After the Beijing Conference, SADC had identified the main problems facing the region: insufficient mechanisms to promote the advancement of women; inequality between women and men in decision-making and access to productive activities and resources; inequality in economic structures and policies; inadequate protection of women and girls; and peace, conflict resolution and management. It had also produced a report on gender activities which had been widely circulated. It should be noted that each member country had drawn up its own plan of action or was in the process of doing so.

21. In November 1997 SADC, in cooperation with UNIFEM, had organized a very successful expo/trade fair in Zimbabwe which had been intended to give exposure to goods produced by women in the informal sector and to facilitate the formation of trade links within the region and with industrialized countries.

22. In February 1998, the SADC countries had participated in a workshop organized in Zambia aimed at enabling them to integrate gender issues and concerns in their national plans of action relating to the environment, land management, and the combat against desertification.

23. In March 1998, SADC had organized in South Africa, in connection with International Women's Day, a regional conference on prevention of violence against women, aimed at raising public awareness of problems relating to such violence in southern Africa and making the Year a period dedicated to combating it. The participants in the Conference had been able to share ideas and exchange experience not only among themselves but also with representatives of other countries and to discuss such subjects as sexual harassment, domestic violence, prostitution, rape, pornography, femicide, the social, cultural, economic and religious context of violence, existing legislation on the subject, training, and raising of public awareness of the problem, particularly through schools, the media and theatre.

24. Likewise in March 1998, SADC had organized in Zimbabwe a women parliamentarian's workshop on violence against women, at which member Governments had resolved to take legislative and educational measures and provide certain services to combat violence of that type.

25. In April 1998, SADC had participated in a consultative meeting on the launching and promotion of the female condom held in South Africa and organized by UNAIDS, WHO and Population Services International. SADC had decided that AIDS was a developmental issue and should be addressed in a wider context. In the same month, it had participated in the ECA Conference on African Women and Economic Development held in Addis Ababa.

26. In June–July 1998, SADC had organized in South Africa a conference on women and trade aimed at helping women to maximize their participation in micro-trade, share experiences and documents, incorporate a gender perspective into macroeconomic policies and bilateral and multilateral agreements and formulate common strategies for advocacy.

27. In June 1998, SADC had established within its secretariat a gender unit whose responsibilities included coordinating and advising the secretariat on gender issues, mainstreaming gender in SADC sectoral development programmes and finalizing the draft SADC plan of action. The latter was intended to promote gender equality and develop a policy and institutional framework for gender mainstreaming in the policies, programmes and activities of SADC member States and in SADC structures and the SADC programme of action, cultivate a culture of equity between men and women and respect for women, facilitate gender equality in access to economic structures and resources, promote female representation in decision-making structures, foster peace, evaluate the impact of war on women and children, and monitor the implementation of the 1997 Declaration on Gender Development and the programme of action.

28. SADC, which was committed to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and could reach its goals with the help of its development partners, was looking forward to the convening of the special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000.

29. **Mr. Ocazionez** (Colombia) said that the current financial crisis had grave implications for the situation of women, because it had been demonstrated that they were always the first to lose their jobs and suffer from the deterioration of the social infrastructure in a country. Moreover, they were often victims of violence by men who were frustrated by the decline in their standards of living. Colombia was affected by the scourge of violence and was therefore gratified that, in 1997, UNIFEM, in collaboration with various other United Nations bodies, governments and civil society in countries of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, had launched a vast programme to combat violence against women. Colombia, for its part, had developed various programmes which were described in a report which it had submitted to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at Vienna and to the Special Rapporteur on violence against women at Geneva.

30. His Government attached great importance to those programmes because it believed that they constituted one of the best means of remedying the violence from which society had suffered so severely for decades. However, it was not enough to provide legal and social protection for women, they must also be enabled to play a role in the promotion of peace and dialogue and the settlement of social conflicts. Peace was based on respect for the human being and any discrimination or violence against women therefore hindered the establishment of a climate conducive to negotiations.

31. The national office for equality between men and women had established various programmes to promote social peace. It had organized regional and national meetings and produced television programmes which stressed the role of women in scientific and artistic fields and at the level of information and communities and their constructive presence within civil society.

32. Colombia was gratified that UNIFEM had established networks of women in favour of peace in various countries of the world, particularly in Africa, which had been hard hit by war. The women of that continent had helped consolidate peace in their countries and reconstruct economies that were devastated by years of conflict. His Government supported those efforts and hoped that the international community would do likewise.

33. **Ms. Arystanbekova** (Kazakhstan) said that improving the status of women and mainstreaming them were among the most important aspects of social development. The Beijing Platform for Action, which defined the priority areas of action, afforded an opportunity for achieving gender equality in all spheres, as did the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women 1996–2001. Despite the political, cultural, financial and other problems which were impeding the implementation of that plan, the experience gained should be duly taken into account when drawing up a new plan. Mention should also be made of the adoption by the Economic and Social Council of agreed conclusions on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all strategies and programmes, which should make it possible to achieve real progress. While welcoming the progress made in the

representation of women in senior posts in the Secretariat, her delegation was concerned about the situation in posts subject to geographical distribution.

34. While advances had been made recently in the implementation of the decisions taken at the Fourth World Conference on Women because society was becoming aware of the need to eliminate the existing imbalances between men and women in order to achieve harmonious development, problems persisted. In that connection, the role of the international instruments designed to promote the attainment of the objectives defined at the Fourth World Conference on Women should also be recognized. Kazakhstan had ratified the Convention, without any reservations, and was counting on the cooperation of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women for the practical implementation of the provisions of the Convention. In the context of building democracy and an open society, the President of Kazakhstan had put forward a comprehensive democratization programme covering elections, political parties, parliament, civil society, the judicial system, the status of women and the mass media. With regard to the status of women, the President had proposed strengthening the role of the council on problems of the family, women and population policy and eventually transforming it into a special commission on women's problems. He had also proposed specific measures, particularly increasing the representation of women in all organs of power, stepping up the campaign to combat violence against women and creating the conditions for the establishment of a bank to grant loans to women. A national plan for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action had been drawn up and approved. Representatives of the council and other women's non-governmental organizations had participated actively in various conferences and workshops at the national, regional and international levels, concerned in particular with the development of mechanisms for the formulation of national plans of action and the analysis of the obstacles impeding the full participation of women in political, economic and social life, women and military conflicts, and trafficking in women.

35. Within the context of cooperation with international organizations and programmes and funds of the United Nations system, her Government and UNDP had signed a microcredit project designed to provide assistance to women, create a working model for replication in other fields and ensure training and the advancement of women. However, that project was being implemented in only two of the five planned regions of Kazakhstan because of insufficient financial resources. The national employment promotion programme, approved each year by her Government, included a special section on the employment of women, who were entering the labour market in increasing numbers. The situation with regard to the development of women's small and medium-sized businesses was more problematic, however, because of the absence of State legal support, mechanisms for loans and for financing on favourable terms, and economic incentives. In view of the importance of international cooperation in resolving such issues, her delegation requested the relevant programmes and funds of the United Nations system, including UNIFEM, which had solid experience in that field, to provide assistance to Kazakhstan. She expressed the hope that the resumed session of the Economic and Social Council in 1999, devoted to the role of employment in eradicating poverty, would make it possible to find innovative solutions to that urgent problem.

36. **Ms. Mekhemar** (Egypt) said that since the holding of the Beijing Conference, remarkable advances had been made in promoting and demarginalizing women and in applying the principle of gender mainstreaming in all the activities of the United Nations and its agencies. The Economic and Social Council had made laudable efforts in that regard, in particular when it had decided to emphasize the feminization of poverty during the 1999 debate on the eradication of poverty and had underscored the role the United Nations system must play in helping Governments to meet their obligations under international instruments.

37. Egypt, having understood since the end of the nineteenth century that there could be no real development without the equal participation of both sexes, had always given priority to the rights of women, by safeguarding them in its Constitution and ensuring gender equality in both health care and education. Egypt was also implementing all the conventions relating to the rights of women and had drawn up a national plan of action to implement the Beijing Platform for Action.

38. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had in 1998 considered a report on reservations to the Convention and decided at its seventeenth session to make a statement on the occasion of the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights regarding those reservations, particularly to article 2 of the Convention. As to the position that the human rights treaties by their very nature could not be subject to reservations, her delegation believed that no distinction could be made between the human rights instruments and other treaties. Treaty law, especially the Vienna Convention of 1979, did not in fact accord any particular status to the human rights instruments in the

matter of reservations. Good progress had been made on the elaboration of a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, but some crucial issues had not yet been taken up by the relevant Working Group and it was therefore not possible to set an exact timetable for drafting and adopting the protocol.

39. **Ms. Lacanlale** (Philippines) said that she welcomed the continuing attention given by the United Nations system to the follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and was particularly pleased with the progress achieved in mainstreaming a gender perspective in United Nations activities. She endorsed the recommendations of the Economic and Social Council on operational activities as a means of promoting capacity-building and resource mobilization in order to enhance the participation of women in development, and especially the inclusion of gender issues in the triennial policy review of operational activities for development. She especially commended UNIFEM for its strong advocacy of women's economic empowerment and its innovative activities at the grass-roots level. She endorsed the agreed conclusions drawn up by the Commission on the Status of Women regarding the four critical areas and encouraged Governments to refer to them in preparing or updating their national action plans. She also urged Member States which had not done so to prepare and submit their national action plans in time for the preparations for the high-level review in the year 2000. Proper indicators had to be developed to determine whether concrete, measurable changes had taken place in women's lives.

40. Trafficking in women and girls was an issue in which her delegation had a keen interest because of the large number of victims in the Pacific region. The Philippines strongly condemned trafficking as a serious violation of human rights and believed that problem could be fought only with international cooperation. Her delegation would therefore be submitting another resolution on the issue and hoped that it would receive broad support. The slow progress on the problem could be explained by the differences in the approaches taken and the ongoing debate on the issues of prostitution and sexual exploitation. Focused measures should be taken, especially in the areas of education and consciousness-raising, training, advocacy, social assistance and legal reform. The breakthroughs in information technology, and the development of the Internet, had greatly facilitated trafficking. It was, of course, right to hesitate to take strong measures that would impinge on certain fundamental freedoms, yet to safeguard those freedoms might unwittingly be to condone the violation of the human rights of the trafficked women and children. Governments should join hands with civil society and the private sector to find ways of preventing that useful means of communication from being used for shameful purposes. Given the nature of the problem, cooperation among States was essential. In that connection, the bilateral project between the Philippines and Belgium on trafficking in women was a good example of a joint initiative. Her Government was exploring the possibility of concluding similar agreements with other countries. Within the United Nations system, there had been various excellent initiatives to address the problem of trafficking in women and children. The Philippines called on the Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Issues to coordinate system-wide activities in that area.

41. Many traditional and customary practices still existed that were harmful to the health of women and girls and were clearly violations of human rights, and her delegation was pleased that Governments and the international community were actively trying to eliminate them. To succeed in doing so would require education and public-awareness campaigns. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women remained a strong instrument for the protection of women's rights and would be further strengthened if it were universally ratified by the year 2000. Her delegation urged States parties to withdraw their reservations to provisions of the Convention. It was concerned over the large number of initial reports that were overdue, and invited Member States to extend assistance to the States parties that were unable to carry out their treaty obligations, particularly the least developed countries, by contributing to a trust fund for the purpose.

42. The impact of the financial crisis on the general population and particularly on its marginalized and vulnerable sectors, including women, was already being felt. The feminization of poverty had become more acute as economic opportunities became more limited. The economic crisis should be a harsh reminder to the international community that it could not bide its time in implementing the commitments it had made in Beijing.

43. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for Palestine) said that the attention given by the international community to the advancement of women, their integration in development and their human rights needed to be transformed into action in fulfilment of the objectives set by the Beijing Platform for Action. Her delegation therefore welcomed the General Assembly's decision to hold, in the year 2000, a high-level review to assess the progress made in implementing the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the Beijing Platform for Action, and hoped that

the outcome of that session would be to adopt an innovative approach and action-oriented programme for the implementation for those important documents. Little progress had been achieved worldwide in the advancement of women, who continued to suffer from inequality, violence, poverty, the negative effects of armed conflict and foreign occupation, and the violation of their basic rights. There had to be a political commitment on the part of Governments to finding solutions to those serious problems.

44. Palestinian women, who were striving for peace, freedom and prosperity, were faced with the harsh reality of the continuing Israeli occupation, which was the main obstacle to their advancement. The building of illegal Israeli colonial settlements, the confiscation of land and water and the recurrent closure of the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and other oppressive measures were adversely affecting the overall situation of Palestinian women. Furthermore, the long years of occupation had led to an increase in the number of refugees and displaced persons, the breaking up of families, the deterioration of health conditions, a decline in education and an increase in unemployment. Nevertheless, Palestinian women continued to participate actively in the struggle for freedom and independence. Inspired by the principles of equality and social justice for all, they sought to strengthen the role and functions of women's institutions with a view to enhancing their effectiveness in mainstreaming women's issues in policies, plans and programmes; to increase awareness among the leadership of the importance of equity between the sexes in economic and social planning; to mobilize the media and non-governmental organizations; and to increase women's representation in decision-making posts. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/1998/2/Add.2), the status and living conditions of Palestinian women were closely linked with the progress of the peace process. Consequently, any deterioration of that process would impede the progress to which Palestinian women aspired. The international community, and in particular the United Nations, must therefore continue to support Palestinian women and increase assistance to them during the current difficult phase of their struggle for equality, development and peace.

45. **Ms. Aguiar** (Dominican Republic) said that her country, which attached particular importance to the situation of women, had signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Convention had proved to be an excellent means of promoting dialogue between the public institutions responsible for the integration of women in political, economic, social and cultural life and civil society, represented by non-governmental organizations which brought together women from all strata of society with a view to exchanging ideas on women's conception of their role and their ability to take charge of their own destinies. The internal mechanisms provided for in the Convention had at least given women the right to be heard in a society dominated by men. Women in the developing countries encountered many difficulties, particularly poverty, by which they were hardest hit, especially in rural areas. There was an urgent need, therefore, to integrate them in development by facilitating their access to microcredit and land ownership through appropriate legislation. The law on agrarian reform adopted by the Dominican Republic conferred on Dominican women for the first time the legal capacity to own the plot of land which provided the means of substance for themselves and their families. Non-governmental organizations had established cooperatives in rural areas which acted as banks for women who were unable to obtain finance for their small farms and businesses. There was, however, a need to intensify efforts in the field of education and with respect to women's participation in political life. The electoral law had thus been amended to guarantee women a quota of seats in elected assemblies and councils. A national commission had been established to coordinate the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, and there were national plans of action for equality, development and peace, which defined the measures the Dominican Government must take in order to achieve gender equality, eliminate discrimination against women and fulfil the commitments made by the country at the regional and international levels. Those hopeful portents should not, however, obscure the very grave problem confronting women throughout the world, namely violence (one of the most insidious forms being domestic violence), to which women were subjected both in developing countries and in the developed nations. Her delegation welcomed in that connection the adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, which, for the first time, defined sexual crimes perpetrated against women and children as war crimes. She also welcomed the efforts undertaken at the regional level in Africa to eradicate harmful traditional practices which undermined the dignity of women and girls.

46. **Ms. Sandru** (Romania) said that her delegation wished to associate itself with the statement by the representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union, and that she would therefore confine her remarks to certain specific aspects of the issue. The fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provided the international community with an opportunity to evaluate the current situation of women's rights, which were universal

human rights, and to give a new impetus to their promotion. Her delegation wished to emphasize in that respect the importance of the draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was to be finalized and adopted very shortly.

47. As a party to the Convention, Romania was particularly keen to establish a constructive dialogue with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and would shortly be submitting its fourth periodic report.

48. Romania's national strategy reflected the efforts of the international community to promote gender equality. The national plan of action for equal opportunities drawn up by the Department for the Advancement of Women comprised two sections: the first set out normative measures aimed at guaranteeing respect for women's rights, while the second contained practical steps aimed at ensuring the de facto exercise of those rights. Romania was setting up an interdepartmental committee to review the implementation of the national plan of action. The various legislative measures aimed at enhancing women's economic status were accompanied by administrative measures to assist those women most affected by the economic reforms. Her Government believed that it was necessary to draft a new Labour Code incorporating provisions on equal opportunities for both sexes.

49. In 1996, the Romanian authorities, deeply concerned by domestic violence, had established specialized structures to prevent that phenomenon and to assist the victims, in close cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

50. While it was the responsibility of Governments to translate the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action into reality, that goal could not be achieved without the assistance of the international community. Romania welcomed cooperation with the United Nations, one example being the programme aimed at developing institutional capacity in the field of women's rights which it had undertaken with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It also welcomed the project launched jointly by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and UNDP to strengthen the capacity of women in political decision-making and the UNIFEM initiative for rural women, which illustrated the importance of the decision taken in 1997 by the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund to allow the countries of central and eastern Europe to benefit from the remarkable skills of UNIFEM in that area. Romania was committed to contributing to the preparation of the special session of the General Assembly to be held in the year 2000. .

51. *Mr. Carranza (Guatemala), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

52. **Mr. Rim Yong Chol** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that, in order to achieve social equality between the sexes, it was vital to guarantee, not only in law but also in practice, equal participation by women in socio-political and economic activities. To that end, countries must adopt social policies and invest in the advancement of women.

53. That was the case in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, where women not only enjoyed *de jure* equality, but also participated actively in the socio-political and economic life of the country.

54. At the international level, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea appreciated the efforts of United Nations agencies, particularly UNIFEM, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and hoped that additional funding would be allocated in the future to agencies working for the advancement of women, particularly in developing countries.

55. In tackling violence against women, which constituted the most serious violation of their fundamental rights, the international community must focus particular attention on the social origin of the problem, and take vigorous legal and social measures to punish the perpetrators. In order to eradicate the problem, it was also necessary to begin by educating young people.

56. It was important, in that connection, that the Japanese Government should recognize its responsibility for the sexual slavery to which the "comfort women" had been subjected by the Japanese Government and military authorities during the Second World War, and that it should be willing to apologize and offer compensation.

57. **Mr. El-Humaimidi** (Iraq) said that his Government attached particular importance to the advancement of women and gender equality, as demonstrated by article 19 of the Iraqi Constitution, Act No. 191 of 1975, which stipulated equal rights between men and women concerning financial benefits, and the Legislative Reform Act No. 35 of 1977, which provided for the amendment of the laws and regulations in force in order to tailor them to the need to create a society based on equality. In addition to being able to occupy the highest positions, Iraqi women, including those living in the remotest areas, enjoyed numerous social benefits. However, the armed aggression in 1991 and the

ensuing embargo, which had continued for over eight years, had had serious consequences for the advancement of women, who, apart from the physical and moral suffering which they endured, were no longer able to play their economic and social roles.

58. Despite those difficult conditions, Iraq had not reneged on its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and endeavoured to submit its periodic reports; the first report had been submitted in 1993 and the second and third during the previous week. A high-level national committee for the advancement of Iraqi women, composed of both governmental and non-governmental bodies, had been established in June 1997 as part of the international strategy for the advancement of women, adopted in accordance with the resolutions of the Fourth World Conference on Women and submitted to the United Nations Secretariat in July 1997.

59. The suffering endured by Iraqi women as a result of the embargo was incompatible with the resolutions of international conferences on women whereby the international community assumed a commitment to enhance the status of women, particularly in the fields of education and employment. In that regard, paragraph 145 (i) of the Beijing Platform for Action stated that measures should be taken with a view to alleviating the negative impact of sanctions on women and children. The first measure to be taken in order to enable Iraqi women to enjoy all their rights and play their pioneering role in society was to lift the economic embargo on the country.

60. **Mrs. Nguyen** (Viet Nam) said that her delegation fully associated itself with the statement delivered by the Indonesian representative on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

61. The implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was but a continuation of Viet Nam's policy in favour of the advancement of Vietnamese women. Her country had established a National Committee for the advancement of women, which had been assigned the task of formulating a national plan of action aimed at eliminating the feminization of poverty and empowering women. The plan also set specific targets to be achieved by the year 2000, *inter alia*, a reduction in the rate of unemployment among women in urban areas, the eradication of illiteracy among female workers aged 15 to 35, the universalization of primary education and an increase in the number of girl pupils in secondary schools, as well as in the number of trained female workers and of female members of elected bodies. As part of that national plan of action, her Government had created job opportunities and income-generating activities for women, provided women with equal access to education, particularly in literacy programmes, improved health care for women and children and enhanced the role of women in leadership mechanisms. In that connection, she underlined that Viet Nam was one of the countries in the Asian Pacific region with the highest rate of women representatives in the National Assembly. Her Government had issued special instructions to the authorities at all levels in the country to pay due attention to the training of women employees. Furthermore, with the assistance of the Netherlands Government and the International Labour Organization, a training and information dissemination programme on the rights of women workers had come into operation in March 1998.

62. At the global level, she noted with satisfaction the many activities which had been carried out throughout the United Nations system with a view to implementing the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women. The National Committee for the advancement of women in Viet Nam was currently working on the second periodic report to be submitted by her country to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by the end of 1998. Viet Nam commended the decision of the Economic and Social Council to devote special attention to the causes and remedies of the feminization of poverty.

63. It was regrettable that many countries had not yet submitted their national action plans or strategies as a follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action. In addition, the conversion of policy declarations into concrete policies and actions at both the national and the international levels required not only political will but also adequate allocations of financial and human resources. It was therefore particularly important to promote the implementation of the 20:20 initiative, as mentioned in paragraph 358 of the Beijing Platform for Action.

64. *Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) resumed the Chair.*

65. **Mrs. Camara** (Guinea) said that adequate financial resources were essential to ensure appropriate follow-up of the Fourth World Conference on Women; to that end the contributions to development agencies should be increased.

66. Her delegation appreciated the Secretary-General's efforts to implement the strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat and encouraged him in his efforts to ensure that, by the year 2000, 50 per cent of the posts subject to geographical distribution would be held by women.

67. Applauding the quality of the field work carried out by the United Nations Development Fund for Women

(UNIFEM), her delegation believed that the Fund should cooperate even more closely with its partners. It would also be appropriate to strengthen the role and mandate of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), which required a stable financial base.

68. She supported all efforts to combat the traffic in women and girls and said that the international community should carry out effective and coordinated action in that field.

69. Her Government had established a mechanism for the advancement of women and had taken measures to ensure gender equality and ascertain that the rights of women (who constituted 51.3 per cent of the population) were integrated into all national programmes. The increase in the number of women in decision-making positions demonstrated that there was a will to ensure that women participated in the management of public affairs. In 1996, the Government had created a Ministry for social, women's and children's affairs, which was responsible for the follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action and for elaborating the national policy for the advancement of women; it had also established a national fund to support women's activities and formulated a national plan of action that constituted an integral part of the national plan for human development and the Government's development strategy to the year 2010, the aim being to enhance legislation relating to the advancement and protection of women, strengthen institutions, reinforce the role of women in the family, as well as their social and cultural role, improve the status of women and secure their economic advancement.

70. In cooperation with the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), the Ministry was implementing a project aimed at raising awareness among girls who were either illiterate or school drop-outs on the subject of health and reproduction. In cooperation with the World Bank, it had provided non-governmental organizations and various other groups with access to information and means of reducing population growth and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had also devised a project on the participation of women in development. She expressed her Government's gratitude to all of its partners in development and its hope that it would continue to benefit from international cooperation with a view to the successful fulfilment of its task.

71. **Ms. Šiminović** (Croatia) said that her country had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and, pursuant to article 134 of the Croatian Constitution, the provisions of the Convention had a higher legal status than national laws. Croatia was carrying out ongoing legal reform, and was careful to ensure that laws which were in the process of being adopted, such as the draft law on family relations, were compatible with the Convention. In January 1998 the Croatian Government had presented its initial report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. It had welcomed the opportunity to engage in an open dialogue with the Committee, and had appreciated the presence of domestic non-governmental organizations. Her delegation welcomed the Committee's concluding comments, which had been widely disseminated in Croatia and which had made an important contribution to the implementation of the Convention. In accordance with the Committee's suggestions, which included measures to eliminate stereotyping and improve the participation of women in political life, the National Commission for Equality, in cooperation with political parties, non-governmental organizations, social partners and the Council of Europe, was organizing a seminar to be held in November 1998 on the participation of women in political life. Her delegation welcomed the progress that had been made in the elaboration of an optional protocol to the Convention which should contribute to the full implementation thereof.

72. Pursuant to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, on 9 May 1996 the Croatian Government had established the National Commission for Equality, and in December 1997 had adopted the National Policy of Equality which incorporated an analysis of the status of women in Croatia. That analysis had demonstrated that women were consistently insufficiently represented in posts of responsibility, particularly in political positions, and that prejudice with regard to women persisted, regardless of the legislation that had been adopted. The policy pursued by Croatia therefore provided specific measures designed to increase the involvement of women, improve their economic situation, facilitate their access to health care and education, ensure respect for their rights and eliminate violence against women in times of peace as well as war. Non-governmental organizations had been invited to work with the National Commission for Equality towards the implementation of that policy. A Council of non-governmental organizations, composed of five representatives, had been established in April 1998 to support the work of the National Commission for Equality. The latter had also established a special working group to collect statistical data on women in all areas of social, political and economic life. Non-governmental organizations and the State Agency for Statistics were also involved in that project. Furthermore,

the Commission had convened a joint meeting with the National Committee for Education in Human Rights in order to remove stereotypes from school curricula and promote gender equality within the national education system.

73. With regard to domestic violence, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare was working with non-governmental organizations to provide shelters for women victims of domestic violence, and was currently organizing a seminar on that issue, in which non-governmental organizations had been invited to participate. A free consultation and advisory service on legal and employment issues was offered once a month by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. Her delegation joined others in welcoming the creation of the International Criminal Court and the decision to include sexual crimes as a category of war crime. With regard to the progress made in gender mainstreaming in United Nations policies and programmes, her delegation welcomed the efforts made in that respect by the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women to achieve the goal of parity between the sexes in the United Nations Secretariat. However, it regretted that women from countries in transition continued to be underrepresented in the Secretariat, and hoped that measures would be taken to correct that situation.

74. Her delegation wished to draw the attention of the members of the Committee to the challenges of the future with regard to reproductive health and the use of new methods of medically-assisted reproduction. In that regard, she noted that in 1996 the Council of Europe had adopted the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine and an additional protocol on human cloning, and that further additional protocols were currently under consideration. In November 1997, UNESCO had adopted the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights. In view of the recent advances which had been made in that field, her delegation proposed that the Third Committee and other relevant United Nations bodies should address the issue of new methods of medically-assisted reproduction and their impact on the reproductive rights of women and women's rights in general.

75. **Ms. Brobbey** (Ghana) said that her delegation commended the work done by United Nations bodies, non-governmental organizations, regional groups and States with a view to eliminating traditional or customary practices that affected the health of women and girls. She noted, however, that the report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women (A/CN.4/1998/54) indicated that much remained to be done in that respect. Her delegation welcomed the joint statement issued by the World Health Organization, UNICEF and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) in April 1997 on female genital mutilation.

76. Ghana had demonstrated its commitment to international conventions on the advancement of women by outlawing certain traditional and cultural practices, including those relating to widowhood, and had enacted legislation on succession in order to protect the rights of widows and children. Furthermore, some non-governmental organizations, in collaboration with the Government, had been engaged in a dialogue with community leaders in that part of Ghana where the Trokosi culture was practised.

77. Her delegation commended those States which had ratified or acceded or succeeded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and appealed to all those which had not yet done so to ratify it as soon as possible. It also supported the proposal by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights that the human rights of women should be highlighted during the activities to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/53/38/Rev.1, para. 465).

78. Her delegation endorsed the conclusions reached by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session which stated that it was the responsibility of Governments to combat all forms of trafficking in women and girls (E/1998/27). Governments were urged to exchange information on that subject and to create data collection centres within Interpol, regional law enforcement agencies and national police forces. It was also important that Governments should carry out campaigns to raise women's awareness of their rights and enable them to take informed decisions.

79. She was encouraged that the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice had adopted, at its seventh session in April 1998, two resolutions to combat trafficking in women and girls by the elaboration of new international instruments aimed at combating the illegal trafficking in and transportation of migrants. She hoped that Member States, for their part, would pass laws to fight against that problem and would punish such crimes with all the severity which they deserved.

80. Concerned by the situation of women in the Secretariat, she pointed out that, according to the report of the Secretary-General on that issue (A/53/376), in spite of the efforts made, there were few women at the senior level. The Secretary-General had also pointed out that, at the current rate of progress, equality between the sexes would not be achieved before the year 2000 in the director category

and 2007 in the professional category. The review of the status of women in the organizations of the common system carried out by the International Civil Service Commission at its forty-seventh session had been just as discouraging. She called on Member States to support the Secretary-General in his task by encouraging women in their countries to apply for positions in the Professional category and above.

81. She expressed disappointment that the reports before the Third Committee made no mention of programmes aimed at educating men on the value and qualities of women. Nor was any mention made of men's responsibilities in programmes aimed at ensuring the advancement of women, failings which should be rectified in the future.

82. **Ms. Mbugua** (United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)), recalling that UNFPA's policy was based on the principles of gender equality and the empowerment of women as contained in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and on the Beijing Platform for Action, noted that in 1999 a five year review and appraisal of implementation at the country level of commitments made at the former would be undertaken. Several round tables and meetings of expert groups on the subject of the advancement of women had already been organized to that end, with the participation of many organizations and representatives of various groups from society. In April 1998 a round table on adolescent reproductive health had been organized in New York. Another round table had been held in Kampala on the subjects of ensuring reproductive rights, the empowerment of women, male involvement and human rights. In November 1998 there would also be a technical meeting on reproductive health services in emergency situations. The regional commissions of the League of Arab States had also undertaken similar appraisal processes with the help of UNFPA.

83. Although the results of the appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development were encouraging, much work nevertheless remained to be done in the promotion of gender equality, women's rights, sexual hygiene and reproductive health. In that connection, greater effort was necessary to meet the special needs of the girl child, ensure her education and eliminate the problem of female genital mutilation, which was the result of the persistence of ancestral practices and which was harmful to the health and future of the girl child. In that context UNFPA was supporting education and communication activities for parents, teachers and community leaders in order to create awareness of the importance of educating girls and of the negative effects of early marriage and early childbirth. Reproductive and sexual health care was also being provided for both girls and boys. One of the successful initiatives to eradicate harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation was a project spearheaded by elders in Uganda, which had won the 1998 United Nations Population Award.

84. UNFPA was especially alarmed by the problem of violence against women. In cooperation with other organizations, it was encouraging the adoption of laws and was supporting a worldwide initiative aimed at eliminating such violence which, whatever form it took, prevented women from making their own decisions in all areas of their lives and kept them from exercising their rights. UNFPA was also encouraging men to show greater responsibility in the area of reproductive health, especially given the danger posed by HIV/AIDS. On balance, UNFPA was satisfied with its efforts and with its cooperation with government organizations and civil society, and would continue to advocate a comprehensive and holistic approach to reproductive health by endeavouring to integrate a human rights approach into its population and development activities.

85. **Ms. Lim** (International Labour Office) commended the work of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, chaired by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, and stressed that the International Labour Organization (ILO) had participated actively in the Committee, most recently at a workshop on the advancement of women and their basic rights. In the context of the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the World Summit for Social Development, in 1997 ILO had launched its International Programme on More and Better Jobs for Women. That programme operated at both the national and international levels and addressed particularly the linkages between women's employment, poverty, sustainable development and the rational use of human resources. It also aimed at demonstrating in practical ways that women's employment should contribute to the reduction of child labour and, working closely with representatives of Governments, employers, workers and other groups in civil society, sought to identify national strategies and plans of action in order to provide more and better jobs for women. The programme was of special importance in the context of globalization and the economic crisis, which affected many countries. Indeed, the ILO World Employment Report, 1998–1999 had pointed out that the number of unemployed around the world had never been higher and there was every indication that the number would continue to increase in the coming months. There was also reason to fear that women would be the principal victims of

that situation and would lose any gains made in the areas of equality and employment.

86. ILO had undertaken a study of prostitution in South-East Asia which had revealed that a growing number of women felt compelled to prostitute themselves for economic reasons. Given the crisis in that region and the increase in unemployment, more and more women would probably be driven into the sex trade sector, as would children forced to leave school because their parents were no longer able to pay for their education. Moreover, the drop in exchange rates caused by the crisis meant that an increase in sex tourism was to be expected. ILO was concerned that most countries did not have a clear policy regarding prostitution, nor any legislation to deal with that problem, especially adult prostitution. ILO had made recommendations in that area, stressing that it was important that measures should be taken not only to assist women and children who were compelled to prostitute themselves but also to deal with those who were responsible for their exploitation and who took advantage of it. Lastly, she indicated that, in addition to those programmes, ILO continued to support various activities aimed at mainstreaming gender concerns into all its policies and programmes, and had recently participated in meetings on the role of women in management and on their working conditions in export-processing zones.

Agenda item 101: Crime prevention and criminal justice *(continued)* (A/C.3/53/L.2, L.3, L.4, L.8 and L.9)

Introduction of draft resolutions

Draft resolution A/C.3/53/L.8: United Nations African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders

87. **Ms. Ukaeje** (Nigeria), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/53/L.8 on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the issue of crime prevention was particularly important to those countries and recalled, in that connection, paragraphs 29 and 30 of the Secretary-General's report on the United Nations African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (A/53/381), which emphasized the detrimental effects of the increase in criminality in Africa and the urgent need for crime prevention strategies and better coordination among law enforcement agencies and the judiciary at the regional and subregional levels. Therefore, there would appear to be every justification to provide the Institute with the necessary resources to assist member States in need of bringing up to date their criminal justice policies and strengthening their criminal justice systems. Her delegation hoped that the Secretary-General's report would be welcomed and that the draft resolution would be adopted without a vote.

Draft resolution A/C.3/53/L.9: Strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity

88. **Mr. Busacca** (Italy), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/53/L.9, announced that Australia, Cameroon, Croatia, France, Georgia, Greece, Guatemala, Israel, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Malta and Sweden had joined the list of sponsors. Recognizing the seriousness of the problem of crime throughout the world, the United Nations had established the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme for the primary purpose of encouraging cooperation and strengthening the national capacities of Member States to deal with that phenomenon. In collaboration with the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Centre for International Crime Prevention, despite its resource constraints, had played a leading role in elaborating a programme for the establishment of national standards and a framework for international action. The decision of Member States to make crime prevention one of the priorities of the medium-term plan for 1998–2001 bore witness to the importance they attached to that problem. The importance of the United Nations Congresses on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders and the Naples Political Declaration and Global Action Plan against Organized Transnational Crime should also be stressed. The Centre for International Crime Prevention must be provided with more resources so that it could fulfil its mandate. In fact, it seemed that programmes to combat crime had been among the most strongly affected by the Organization's financial difficulties. The draft resolution contained some new elements, particularly in paragraphs 5, 7, 8, 11, 13 and 15. Two minor revisions should be made: in paragraph 7, the words "the civil society organizations, including non-governmental organizations" should be replaced with the words "non-governmental organizations and other relevant sectors of civil society"; and in paragraph 13, the words "the main text of the Convention as well as of" should be inserted after the words "attention to the drafting of".

89. **Ms. Kaba Camara** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that her country wished to join the list of sponsors of the draft resolution.

Decisions on draft resolutions

Draft resolution A/C.3/53/L.2: Preparations for the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders

90. **The Chairman** said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications and that the Economic and Social Council had recommended its adoption.

91. *Draft resolution A/C.3/53/L.2 was adopted.*

Draft resolution A/C.3/53/L.3: Transnational organized crime

92. **The Chairman** said that the draft resolution, which the Economic and Social Council had recommended for adoption, had no programme budget implications. However, it did have implications for conference services. In that connection, he recalled the budgetary provisions for the biennium 1998–1999 described in annex II of the report of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, which indicated that provision had been made not only for meetings programmed at the time of budget preparation but also for meetings authorized subsequently, provided that the number and distribution of meetings were consistent with the pattern of meetings established in past years.

93. *Draft resolution A/C.3/53/L.3 was adopted.*

Draft resolution A/C.3/53/L.4: Mutual assistance and international cooperation in criminal matters

94. **The Chairman** said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications and that the Economic and Social Council had recommended its adoption.

95. *Draft resolution A/C.3/53/L.4 was adopted.*

Agenda item 102: International drug control *(continued)* (A/C.3/53/L.7)

Draft resolution A/C.3/53/L.7: International cooperation against the world drug problem

96. **Mr. Albin** (Mexico), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/53/L.7, said that Bangladesh, Belgium, Cameroon, the Dominican Republic, Kyrgyzstan, Namibia and Zambia had joined the list of sponsors, bringing the total number of sponsors to 99.

97. The outcome of the twentieth special session of the General Assembly had been the result of negotiations and dialogue among Member States. Undoubtedly, the documents adopted would guide the actions taken to combat a phenomenon that knew no boundaries and posed a serious threat to societies, and particularly to young people.

98. The large number of countries sponsoring the draft resolution bore witness to the international community's spirit of cooperation and its desire to strengthen the relevant United Nations mechanism to improve its capacity to take action against the scourge of drugs.

99. The preamble of the draft resolution outlined various aspects of the world drug problem and the outcome of the special session, and the operative part was divided into four sections. The text reflected the consensus reached in June, and he hoped that it would be adopted by consensus.

100. **Ms. Kaba Camara** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that her country wished to join the list of sponsors of the draft resolution.

Agenda item 100: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family *(continued)* (A/C.3/53/L.6)

Draft resolution A/C.3/53/L.6: The International Year of Older Persons, 1999

101. **The Chairman** said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications. He recalled that Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Bolivia, China, Croatia, Denmark, Egypt, Guatemala, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Monaco, Norway, Pakistan, Paraguay, San Marino, South Africa, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, Uruguay and Venezuela had joined the list of sponsors when the draft had been introduced, and announced that Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Guinea, India, Israel, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nepal, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sudan and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had also joined the list of sponsors.

102. **Ms. Aguiar** (Dominican Republic) announced that Cameroon, Malta, New Zealand, the Russian Federation, Thailand and the United States of America had joined the list of sponsors of the draft resolution.

103. *Draft resolution A/C.3/53/L.6 was adopted.*

104. **The Chairman** said that the Committee had completed its consideration of agenda item 100.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.